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at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ BALLON (Uruguay)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Group of Asian States and the Group of African States had nominated Mr. Guerrero (Philippines) and Ms. Diop (Senegal) respectively for the posts of Vice-Chairman and that the Group of Western European and Other States had nominated Mr. Balzan (Malta) for the post of Rapporteur.

2. Mr. Guerrero (Philippines) and Ms. Diop (Senegal) were elected Vice-Chairmen and Mr. Balzan (Malta) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

3. The CHAIRMAN reported on the organizational arrangements for the consideration of agenda item 79. The General Assembly had decided that the item would be taken directly in plenary meeting, on the understanding that the Second Committee would adopt the relevant measures; following extensive consultations it had been agreed to establish an ad hoc working group chaired by Mr. Razali (Malaysia) to conduct informal consultations on the item.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/47/250, 251, 252; A/C.2/47/1, A/C.2/47/L.1 and Add.1)

4. After a brief exchange of courtesies the CHAIRMAN drew attention to a letter dated 18 September 1992 from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Second Committee (A/C.2/47/1) concerning the allocation of items to the Committee, and he referred also to documents A/C.2/47/L.1 and Add.1. In addition he drew the Committee's attention to several measures adopted by the General Assembly, on the basis of the recommendations contained in the first report of the General Committee concerning the organization of the forty-seventh regular session (A/47/250), with a view to enhancing the efficiency of and achieving economies in the legislative process.

5. Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee) said that the following changes had been made in the Committee's programme of work (A/C.2/47/L.1):

Monday 5 October: "p.m." should read "a.m.".

Friday 9 October: The Committee had been requested to defer its discussion of item 90 until additional information was received from the Chernobyl seminar to be held in Kiev in the first week of November in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/38.

Monday 12 October: A note to the effect that items 84 and 78 would be taken together had been omitted.

(Ms. Kelley)

Thursday 22 October: With regard to item 78 (Part V) the title of the report should be amended to read "Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on the work of its third special session".

Week of
23-27 November: The Committee would conclude its work on Friday 4 December.

6. Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia) said that his delegation supported the establishment of the ad hoc working group (which would not set a precedent) in view of the important work which the Committee was about to do in connection with the Rio Conference items. He asked whether the ad hoc group would meet before or after the debate in the plenary Assembly. Referring to paragraph 6 of document A/C.2/47/L.1 he asked whether interpretation facilities in the six official languages would be available for the work of the ad hoc group and the informal consultations, and how the work of the two working groups of the Vice-Chairmen and the work of the ad hoc group would be organized.

7. The CHAIRMAN, replying to the questions put by the representative of Tunisia, said that the ad hoc group was being established on a one-off basis as a result of the general interest in an item of such importance. It would meet shortly to determine which items to consider. In due course and in sultation with the President of the General Assembly the group's programme of work would be drawn up, and in consultation with delegations it would be ascertained whether it could begin its work during the general debate in the Assembly or whether it would be more convenient to wait until the week following 9 October.

8. Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee) said that everything possible would be done to make interpretation facilities available for the informal consultations.

9. Mr. MARTIN (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the countries members of the European Community, referred to the suggestion by the Secretary of the Committee that the debate on the Chernobyl disaster should be transferred from October to a date subsequent to the seminar on the topic to be held in Kiev at the beginning of November. Any postponement would cause serious difficulties for the States members of the European Community, which had important proposals to submit to the Committee on the item. The Twelve would like to bring those proposals forward at an early stage in the Committee's work. They understood of course that the Secretariat should wish to inform the Committee about the results of the seminar and they had no objection to that. However, Governments must be given an opportunity to state their views on the item. The Chairman had said how important it was for the Committee to complete its work on time; that did not seem possible unless it took up the Chernobyl item in the early stages of its work. The Community's proposals would be important ones, and he hoped that the Committee would approve them.

(Mr. Martin, United Kingdom)

10. With regard to the arrangements for the debate on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), he endorsed the view of the representative of Tunisia that it would be very useful for the Chairman of the Committee to ask the President of the General Assembly whether the date for consideration of the item in plenary meeting could be decided quickly. Ministers from many countries wished to come for that debate and it was difficult for them to find time to do so; the later the date of the debate was announced, the more difficult it would be for high-level officials to attend.

11. Document A/C.2/47/L.1/Add.1 referred to two important documents: the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development and the report of the Rio Conference itself.

12. He had been informed that volumes I to IV of the report of the Conference would be available at the beginning of October. Since it was already the beginning of October, it was to be hoped that delegations would have the report within the next few days. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General, neither the Secretariat department which was to produce it or the envisaged date of distribution were known.

13. However, it was absolutely essential for the report to be available for the negotiations on the Conference. It was to be hoped that the Chairman of the Committee would bring the urgency of the matter to the attention of the relevant Secretariat units.

14. Lastly and also with respect to item 79, he asked what the Secretariat's intention was. A discussion of organizational arrangements was planned, and there was a deadline for closure of the list of speakers. However, since the debate was to be held directly in plenary meeting, it was perhaps the only item for which a list of speakers was not needed. It would be of great help to the States members of the European Community if the Secretariat could indicate what the intentions were with regard to the discussion of the item.

15. The CHAIRMAN said that he would put the question of the date of the debate on the UNCED report to the President of the General Assembly.

16. Mr. STOBY (Director, Division of Economic and Social Council Affairs and Inter-agency Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Development) said that a working group of independent high-level advisers had been established with a view to submitting recommendations. The Secretary-General wished to have those recommendations to hand before completing his reports on UNCED. It was hoped that the reports would be available during the last week of October. On that basis it was envisaged that the General Assembly's debate on the Conference could begin during the week beginning 2 November.

17. Mr. GOUMENUY (Ukraine) said that he favoured consideration of item 90 at a later date. The Secretary-General was to provide a lengthy report concerning cooperation on Chernobyl in accordance with the related decision

(Mr. Goumenuy, Ukraine)

of the Economic and Social Council, and time would be needed both to prepare and to study that report. At the same time, his delegation shared the United Kingdom's concern that the Committee should complete its work on time. To postpone consideration of the item relating to Chernobyl would not have any negative consequences because such consideration would take place in November and the Committee would therefore be able to complete its work in early December as planned.

18. Page 27 of document L.1/Add.1 mentioned only two documents under the Chernobyl item; no mention was made of document A/47/132. That document, submitted by his country on 23 March 1992, contained an appeal from the leaders of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine to the United Nations concerning provision of assistance in connection with Chernobyl. The document had been adopted in Kiev at a summit meeting between the leaders of those three countries. He requested that it be included among the documents to be considered by the Committee during the current session.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of Ukraine did not think it necessary to change the date for consideration of agenda item 90. However, the representative of the United Kingdom had proposed an alteration of the date planned for such consideration. He wondered whether it would strike the representative of Ukraine as inconvenient if consideration of the item were brought forward, provided that the necessary documentation was made available.

20. Mr. GOUMENUY (Ukraine) believed that the report of the Secretary-General on Chernobyl would be an important document and should be prepared in the proper manner in accordance with the decisions of the Economic and Social Council. If that document was ready on time, his delegation would have no objection to the date of the discussion being brought forward.

21. Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee) said that the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation for Chernobyl had contacted the Bureau and requested a change in the date planned for consideration of the item by the Committee in view of the fact that a meeting on Chernobyl would be held at Kiev in the first week of November.

22. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Russian Federation) said it was his understanding that the Secretariat, the Bureau and the Coordinator would consider the various proposals on the most appropriate date for consideration of the Chernobyl item. His delegation had taken note of the statement by the representative of the United Kingdom and looked forward with great interest to the important proposal to be made by the European Community. Nevertheless, he agreed with and endorsed the ideas expressed by Ukraine. Consideration of the item should be postponed in order that the relevant documentation could be prepared.

23. The documents which must be placed before the Committee in accordance with the decisions of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session would not be ready before 9 October. It

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, Russian Federation)

would not be a good idea to hold the discussion on Chernobyl without those documents. Secondly, it should be made clear that early November would see not a seminar on Chernobyl but a meeting of a special working group comprising representatives of those specialized agencies of the United Nations which were providing assistance at Chernobyl. In his opinion, it would not be right to consider the item without taking account of the opinions expressed by the specialized agencies at the Kiev meeting. Finally, his delegation would have no objection, given that the European Community countries wished to make their proposal known to the Committee at the earliest opportunity, if the representative of the United Kingdom were to introduce that proposal as soon as it was ready, even before consideration of the Chernobyl item. Meanwhile, he endorsed the proposal of Ukraine whereby the list of documents on the Chernobyl item should be extended to include the statement by the leaders of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

24. Mr. MARTIN (United Kingdom) said that consideration of agenda item 90 had been scheduled for Friday, 9 October, and there had been no prior announcement of any change in that schedule. His delegation was surprised by the sudden proposal to postpone such consideration. The courtesy of providing information on proposed changes would have made it possible to hold consultations for the purpose of reaching an agreement.

25. In the course of the discussions of the Economic and Social Council, the Under-Secretary-General had indicated in his report on the programme relating to Chernobyl, inter alia, that pledged contributions amounted only to $1 million, as opposed to the $600 million required for the programme. The European Community and its member States, which had been in contact with the Secretary-General and interested Governments, had considered possible ways of resolving the situation and prepared a declaration which they planned to make public during the general discussion. All delegations would thus have had the opportunity to express their opinions before the Kiev meeting, with a view to formulating a draft resolution in cooperation with the interested States. If that task was not begun before the Kiev meeting, it would not, in his delegation's opinion, be possible to reach an agreement on so complex an issue before the date mentioned, i.e. before 4 December. His delegation had been in contact with the delegations of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, which were aware of the United Kingdom's position on that issue. His delegation therefore opposed any postponement of the discussion of the item, which should be considered in October.

26. The CHAIRMAN proposed that informal consultations be held between the delegation of the United Kingdom, which acted also on behalf of the European Community, and the delegations of States with an interest in the item, and that the Bureau and secretariat of the Committee should be informed of the results of such consultations.

27. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Russian Federation) said he would be happy to engage in informal consultations on item 90 with all interested delegations.

28. Mr. MOJOUKHOV (Belarus), while supporting the proposal to hold informal consultations concerning a possible postponement of the discussion of item 90, reserved the right of his delegation to make comments of substance in connection with the Chernobyl issue.

29. Miss JANJUA (Pakistan), also speaking on behalf of the States members of the Group of 77, believed that item 84 and Part II of item 78 should not, given their complexity, be considered concurrently, as scheduled in the draft programme of work, and proposed that consideration of one of the two items be postponed until a later date. With regard to item 79, while welcoming the creation of the ad hoc working group, she believed that the group could begin its work only after its members had received the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development because it could not base its discussions on the informal notes taken by each delegation.

30. Page 12 of document A/C.2/47/L.1 indicated that discussion of agenda item 12 would take place on 10 November but did not mention which chapters would be considered. She requested that the secretariat make it clear, if possible in writing, which chapters would in fact be under discussion.

31. Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee), replying to the representative of Pakistan, said that there had been no intention, in scheduling discussion of items 84 and 78 (Part II) for the same day, of detracting from the importance of either item. With regard to item 78, it was planned that the meeting on 12 October should include only the introduction of a very brief note from the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the President of the Economic and Social Council. The introduction of that note could, if preferred, be postponed until another meeting. Volumes I to IV of the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development would be issued on 9 October and the report of the Secretary-General at the end of October. Page 2 of document A/C.2/47/1 indicated which chapters of the report of the Economic and Social Council had been allocated to the Committee.

32. The CHAIRMAN said that he would take it that the Committee wished to consider items 84 and 78 (Part II) at separate meetings.

33. It was so decided.

34. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) noted that item 83 was due to be considered on Monday, 19 October, but that most of the relevant documents would be issued only one week prior to that date (between 12 and 13 October). His delegation, like others with a limited staff, found it difficult to study in detail the documents relating to the discussions of various bodies if such documents were not issued in sufficient time. He therefore asked that consideration of item 83 be postponed until at least two weeks after the date of issue of the documents.

35. Mr. MONTOYA (Colombia) said that his delegation shared the concerns expressed by the representatives of Tunisia and Pakistan in connection with the beginning of the work of the ad hoc group on item 79 and suggested that every possible effort be made to ensure that all documents were issued by 16 October rather than the end of October as announced.

36. Mr. BIAOU (Benin), endorsing the views expressed by the representatives of Pakistan and Colombia, said that his delegation was disturbed that the ad hoc working group would be inconvenienced by the delay in receiving the reports of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

37. Mr. YENEL (Turkey) said that he would refer to a subject which, although not arising until the end of the session, was undoubtedly of fundamental importance, namely, consideration of the draft biennial programme of work for the Second Committee, called for in General Assembly resolution 39/217, of 18 December 1984. The usual procedure was to consider the draft programme after the relevant draft resolutions had already been adopted. Experience showed, however, that every year, when the various draft resolutions were being considered - a process which frequently required the submission of supplementary reports or gave rise to requests for the inclusion of new items - delegations complained that documents were still not being distributed sufficiently in advance and, above all, that the Committee was not achieving the desired objective of reducing its workload and that agenda items continued to proliferate.

38. For those reasons, his delegation proposed that, for the current session, the draft biennial programme of work should be considered before the relevant draft resolutions were adopted. To that end, delegations would need a complete list of reports required under the various draft resolutions in order to be able to reduce their number and length. The Secretariat could prepare and distribute a reference list by mid-November. The work of the Secretariat, the Committee and delegations would thereby be rationalized and simplified.

39. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of Turkey had put forward an interesting proposal which the Bureau would consider carefully.

40. Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia) observed that the concerns expressed by the representative of Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77, with regard to item 12 had not been satisfactorily explained.

41. The document on the organization of work of the Committee usually listed items and subitems. Delegations thus knew what issues were to be debated and had an opportunity from the outset of engaging in any appropriate formal or informal negotiations, or of resorting to other procedures. An attempt was now being made to cover a very important item in only two days; furthermore, delegations were expected to act without knowing for sure how to proceed. He would welcome a precise explanation as to which subitems would be considered and hoped that a revised version of document A/C.2/47/L.1 would be distributed, even an informal version.

(Mr. Jomaa, Tunisia)

42. It was impossible to hold a serious debate or carry out substantive work on the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development until the Secretary-General's report on UNEP was available. In order to enable delegations to ascertain the Secretary-General's views on the environment and development, including the availability of resources to set up a special fund or to resort to other means, it would also be useful in that case to have a document, distributed in advance and informally, containing views of the Secretary-General.

43. In any case, the Chairman of the ad hoc working group might well already begin holding informal consultations in order to ascertain which items should be considered and at what time. His delegation merely proposed that the group should seek views that might serve as a guide in the near future, so as to escape from the predicament in which the Committee found itself.

44. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretary had informed him that an informal document could be distributed, outlining the issues included under item 12. The Chairman of the ad hoc working group might wish to take note of the views and concerns expressed in the Committee in order to proceed in a manner consonant with the availability of documents.

45. Mr. PAULINICH (Peru), referring to the views expressed by the representative of Turkey, said that the limitation on the number of resolutions could be considered only in terms of the importance of the agenda items, as would be noted in particular during the consideration of item 46. In that regard, the Group of 77 submitted more draft resolutions, depending on the importance of each item.

46. Mr. YENEL (Turkey) explained that he had proposed a reduction not in the number of draft resolutions - which also would be extremely useful - but in the number of items and of reports requested by the Committee.

47. Ms. KELLEY (Secretary of the Committee), replying to the representatives of Pakistan and Morocco, suggested that consideration of item 78 (Part II) should be postponed from 12 to 14 October and item 83 from 19 to 26 October, so that four meetings could be held on the item during that week.

48. Miss JANJUA (Pakistan) pointed out that postponement of item 83 might well interfere with the informal consultations, since that process was very tiring. If the report could not be distributed before 12 October, the Committee would have to accept the Secretary's suggestion.

49. The CHAIRMAN said that, since the documents could not be distributed earlier, it would be appropriate to accept the suggested new dates, allowing one more week in which to study the documents.

50. Ms. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said that, in deferring item 83 from 19 until 26 October, it would be logical to move the informal consultations from the week beginning 26 October to the week beginning 19 October.

51. Mr. MARTIN (United Kingdom) suggested that, in order to facilitate the Committee's work, the informal consultations should be held on 19, 20 and 21 October.

52. Miss JANJUA (Pakistan) suggested that the debate on item 83, instead of being held in the afternoon of 26 October, should be held in the morning of that day.

53. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee approved the programme of work in document A/C.2/47/L.1, as orally revised and in accordance with the proposals put forward.

54. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.